

# *The Jerusalem Cathedra*

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STUDIES IN THE HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY,  
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# Muslim Literature in Praise of Jerusalem: Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis

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**F**aḍā'il, *manāqib*, *maḥāsin* and *khaṣā'is* are only a few of the many terms in Arabic literature denoting literary genres devoted to extolling the virtues of particular person, country, or city. Despite the differences in meaning, these genres are like in that they usually appear as traditions or chapters within a larger framework, assuming an independent character only at a later stage.

## Different Types of Faḍā'il Literature and Their Development\*

*Faḍā'il* literature seems to have evolved from the following: (a) The "boasting poems" (*tafākhur*) of various Arab tribes prior to the emergence of Islam, in which the Bedouin would extol the qualities of their tribesmen and the regions in which they wandered (*diyār*). (b) Traditions, preserved in historical books and "*adab*",<sup>1</sup> quoting the speeches of the Arab delegations before the kings of Persia. The authenticity of these traditions is less important than the fact that they were widespread as early as the second century A.H. (eighth century C.E.) It had also found expression in the *wufūd* speeches made to the Prophet Muḥammad.<sup>2</sup> Their Islamic character was emphasized by the addition of a verse from the Qur'ān, a portion of exegesis, a *ḥadīth* (a tradition handed down by the Prophet or about him), or a Jewish or Christian tradition.

*Khaṣā'is* and *shamā'il* literature grew out of the Muslim interest in the life of the Prophet and the miracles attributed to him in the earliest period of Islam. They deal with those attributes which distinguish the Prophet from human beings in general and other

\* This subject has been dealt with extensively by E.A. Gruber, *Verdienst und Rang. Die Faḍā'il als literarisches und gesellschaftliches Problem im Islam* (Frieberg im Brigsau, 1975).

1 A form of *belle lettres*, encyclopedic in character, which according to Goldziher "is not the summary of any precise branch of knowledge but the adoption from each branch of what is necessary for general education, the comprehension of the past, and the cultural relations of the Arabs to other peoples. In *adab* a prominent place is assigned to the knowledge of poetry and ancient stories." See I. Goldziher, *History of Classical Arabic Literature* (Hildesheim, 1966), p. 82. An example of such traditions may be found in *Al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, I, 166-178.

2 See, for example, the speeches of the delegates of the Tamīm and Hamdān tribes in *Al-Sīra*, Ibn Hishām, IV, 206-213, 246-343.



prophets in particular. Rivalry between urban centers such as Mecca and Medina, al-Kūfa and al-Baṣra also contributed to the development of *faḍā'il* traditions.<sup>3</sup>

Most of these traditions are to be found in *ḥadīth* literature. A glance at one of the later collections of *ḥadīth* such as *Kanz al-'Ummāl* by al-Muttaqī al-Hindī (d. 976 A.H./1567-1568 C.E.), that still consists mainly of early material, reveals the broad spectrum of *faḍā'il* genre which flourished in the first centuries after the rise of Islam. Here are only a few of the varieties of *faḍā'il* contained in this work:

- Faḍā'il* of each chapter and verse in the Qur'ān
- Faḍā'il* of the two professions of faith (*al-shahādātān*)<sup>4</sup>
- Faḍā'il* recalling the name of Allah (*al-dhikr*)
- Faḍā'il* of the Prophet's companions (*al-ṣaḥāba*)
- Faḍā'il* of the pilgrimage (*al-ḥadj*)
- Faḍā'il* of the Holy War (*al-djihād*)
- Faḍā'il* of repentance (*al-tauba*).

The inclusion of any kind of religious *faḍā'il* in *ḥadīth* collections necessitated the use of the same technique employed in relating *ḥadīths* — breaking each tradition down into two parts: the chain of authorities (*sanad*) and the body or content (*matn*) of the tradition. This applied to praise of the cities holy to Islam — Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Such *faḍā'il* may even be found in the six canonic collections of *ḥadīth* traditionally accepted as faultless (*al-kutub al-ṣaḥīḥa*).

### The Importance of Jerusalem in Islam; Factors Leading to Creation and Development of *Faḍā'il* Bayt al-Maqdis

Recognition of the special status of Jerusalem came at a very early stage in Islamic history. One reason was that Muslims had prayed in this direction for a period of 16 to 18 months, before they began praying towards Mecca. Another was the identification of Jerusalem with *al-masdjid al-Aqṣā* or "the Further Mosque," referred to in the Qur'ān in the first verse of the Night Journey: "Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque the precincts of which We have blessed..."<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that not all Muslim theologians agree with this interpretation. Some claim the "Further Mosque" is a reference to the celestial mosque said to be located directly above Jerusalem or Mecca.<sup>6</sup> Some Shī'ites also reject any identification of *al-masdjid al-Aqṣā* with Jerusalem, and their literature abounds in traditions which deny the

3 See al-Yaghmurī, *Nūr al-Qabas*, pp. 172-173, 233-234 for examples of these traditions.

4 The two professions of faith each Muslim must make as the essence of his belief: the oneness of Allah and the prophecy of Muḥammad.

5 All verses from the Qur'ān will be taken from *The Koran Interpreted* by Arthur J. Arberry, unless otherwise stated.

6 See EI<sup>1</sup>, *Isrā'*; M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet* (Paris 1969), p. 93.

city any special significance. They hold that al-Kūfa mosque is just as important as that of Jerusalem and perhaps even more so.<sup>7</sup>

The following factors led to the development of Islamic literature in praise of Jerusalem:

1. *The Umayyad Dynasty.* Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (661-680 C.E.), the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, played an instrumental and perhaps even decisive role in granting Jerusalem a special status in Islam. Although all previous caliphs had been sworn in as heads of state (*bay'a*) in Medina, Mu'āwiya took this oath in Jerusalem. History books are full of traditions attributed to him proclaiming Jerusalem as "the land where the people will gather and arise from the dead on Judgment Day" (*arḍ al-maḥshar wa-l-manshar*).<sup>8</sup> It was he who labelled Jerusalem and Syria "the sanctifying land" (*al-arḍ al-muqaddissa*),<sup>9</sup> and transmitted a tradition in the name of the Prophet about al-Shām (greater Syria) as "the chosen land of Allah to which he will lead the best of his Servants."<sup>10</sup> It is told of him that while on the pulpit in the Bayt al-Maqdis mosque he said: "God loves the area between the two walls of this mosque more than any other place in the world."<sup>11</sup>

As the builder of the Dome of the Rock, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, the fifth Umayyad caliph (685-705 C.E.) was accused of trying to direct the pilgrimage away from Mecca to Jerusalem. Although Goitein has proved this accusation to be unfounded,<sup>12</sup> the fact remains that traditions about the importance and sanctity of Jerusalem did flourish at this time — traditions based on what is usually called *al-kutub*, i.e. Jewish and Christian texts and legends. The custom of visiting certain sites in Jerusalem and praying there also commenced during this period.<sup>13</sup>

2. *Penetration of Jewish and Christian Traditions into Islam.* A brief survey of *faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* is all that is necessary to discern the extent to which these essays abound in traditions known by Muslim theologians as *isrā'iliyyāt*. So pronounced is this phenomenon that it could only have resulted from a steady incorporation of the traditions of the Peoples of the Book (Jews and Christians) over a long period of time

7 One such tradition handed down from Abū 'Abd Allāh (the Shī'ite *imām*, Dja'far al-Ṣādiq) is as follows: "I asked him which mosques took precedence. The Holy Mosque (of Mecca) and the Mosque of the Prophet (of Medina), he replied. I said: I am ready to lay down my life for you, and what about the Aqṣā Mosque? He said: That is the one in heaven to which the messenger of Allāh journeyed by night. I said: The people say this is a reference to Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem). He said: Al-Kūfa takes precedence over it." See *Biḥār al-Anwār*, XXII, 90, 8 lines from the bottom. Similar traditions appear on pp. 87-90.

8 See al-Balāḍhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, IV, 1, 25; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, X, 129.

9 See Ibn al-Faqīh, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, p. 115.

10 See *Muthīr al-Gharām*, ms. Paris, f. 11b.

11 See *Bā'ith al-Nufūs*, p. 24; Ibn 'Asākir, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*, f. 10a.

12 S.D. Goitein, "The Sanctity of Jerusalem and Palestine in Early Islam," in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, 1966), pp. 135-148.

13 See al-Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* (Jerusalem, 1979), p. 102, no. 165; *Ithāf al-Akhiṣṣā*, ms. Hebrew University of Jerusalem, f. 7a.

until they formed an integral part of *ḥadīth* literature, stories of the prophets and even history books.<sup>14</sup> This is illustrated in *Ta'riḫ Wāsiṭ* of Baḥshal al-Wāsiṭī (d. 905 C.E.), regarded as the earliest work of its kind to be handed down to us.<sup>15</sup> The two opening statements are as follows: (1) "When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem the world wept. Kaskar (the city upon whose ruins Wāsiṭ was built) wept most of all. Allah, may He be praised and exalted, comforted her by saying 'I will build a mosque here where I will be much recalled and worshipped.' This is taken to mean the Wāsiṭ mosque."<sup>16</sup> (2) "On one of his journeys between al-Kūfa and al-Baṣra searching for a site to build Wāsiṭ, al-Ḥadjdjādī b. Yūsuf (d. 95 A.H./714 C.E.), 'Abd al-Malik's envoy in Iraq, met a monk whose beast had defecated on the road. The monk dismounted and picked up the excrement. His curiosity aroused, al-Ḥadjdjādī asked the monk for an explanation. The monk replied: 'In our books it is written that during the Flood a part of the Holy Land tore away and came to rest here. Since this is the spot, I did not want my beast's excrement to fall upon it.'"<sup>17</sup> al-Ḥadjdjādī decided to build the city of Wāsiṭ on this "holy" site.

These two traditions are evidence that Jerusalem and the Holy Land were considered holy to Islam; in order to be recognized as a Muslim city, Wāsiṭ had to have some link with other places sacred to Islam. Moreover, they show the early inclusion of Jewish traditions about the sanctity of Jerusalem in Muslim tradition.

Wāsiṭ was not the only city established on the basis of traditional ties with Jerusalem. 'Abādān, to which many *faḍā'il* were devoted on account of its being a coastal or border town (*thaghr*), was also said to have been built from the clay of Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup>

It should be pointed out that the *faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* tract of Musharraf b. al-Muradjdā (eleventh century C.E.) is also abundant in Jewish and Christian traditions (*isrā'īliyyāt*). Whole sections of the Bible appear here in Arabic translation, some of them transmitted by the famous Arab writer, Ibn Qutayba (d. 276 A.H./889 C.E.). Included, for example, are the biblical episodes of the sacrifice of Isaac,<sup>19</sup> Jacob's dream,<sup>20</sup> and Deuteronomy 33:2 with exegetical "proof" that the teachings of Moses prophesied the coming of Muḥammad.<sup>21</sup> Also available are quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah, as well as traditions about Joshua, King David, King Solomon and others.

3. *The Zuhhād*. The *Zuhhād* were the first Muslim ascetics<sup>22</sup> whose custom it was to seclude themselves in the environs of Jerusalem (apparently in imitation of Christian

14 See M.J. Kister, "Ḥaddithū 'an Banī Isrā'īla wa-lā Ḥaraja, A Study of an Early Tradition," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), 215-239.

15 See Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, (Leiden, 1968), p. 166.

16 See *Ta'riḫ Wāsiṭ*, p. 35.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

18 See Miknāsī, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*, ms. Tübingen, no. 25, f. 117a.

19 See Abū al-Ma'ālī, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*, ms. Tübingen, no. 27, f. 42b.

20 *Ibid.*, f. 6b.

21 *Ibid.*, f. 95a.

22 See S.D. Goitein, "The Sanctity of Palestine in Muslim Piety" (Hebrew), *Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society* 12, 120-126.

hermits). The *adab* literature which preceded *faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* contains many sayings about the unique status of Jerusalem attributed to early Muslim ascetics such as al-Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Sariyy al-Saqāṭī, Ibrāhīm b. Adham and Bishr b. al-Hārith. These traditions, transmitted by Abū al-Ma'ālī, were subsequently included in many other *faḍā'il* treatises.

4. *The Quṣṣās*. The *quṣṣās* were the storytellers—or to be more precise, those who popularized various traditions, particularly the stories of *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the Jews and the Christians). These people were instrumental in circulating traditions in praise of Jerusalem regardless of their origin. It is, therefore, not surprising that traditional *ḥadīth* criticism, which disapproved of most *faḍā'il* traditions, branded their transmitters as *qāṣṣ*.

5. *The Crusades*. Later on, the Crusades stimulated the writing of works in praise of Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of all these factors, the first collection of *faḍā'il* devoted to Jerusalem (by al-Khaṭīb Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī, the preacher of the Aqṣa mosque), was to appear only in 410 A.H. (1019-1020 C.E.), whereas many cities which today seem much less important or sacred to Islam were the subject of *faḍā'il* (and *ta'riḥ*, essays whose first chapter was usually dedicated to *faḍā'il* of a particular city or region) long before this. Why were collections of *faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* so late in appearing as compared with cities such as Qazwīn, 'Abādān, Wāsiṭ, Baṣra, Kūfa, Djurdjān, etc.? This question is even more poignant in view of the fact that most of the traditions dealing with Jerusalem's unique status were widely known and accepted, especially in Greater Syria but elsewhere as well.<sup>24</sup>

To phrase the question differently, literature in praise of Jerusalem appeared in the form of isolated traditions, at least from the time of al-Zuhrī (d. 124 A.H./742 C.E.)<sup>25</sup> Why then were they not collected in a single work, like those for other cities, until the beginning of the fifth century after the *hijra*?<sup>26</sup> Might this not be a reflection of the ambivalent Muslim attitude toward Jerusalem, considering the battle then raging

23 E. Sivan, "Le caractère sacré de Jérusalem dans l'Islam aux XIIe-XIIIe siècles," *Studia Islamica* 27 (1967), 149-182; idem, "The Beginnings of the *Faḍā'il al-Quds* Literature," *Israel Oriental Studies* 1 (1971), 263, 271.

24 A biographical investigation of the persons mentioned in the essay of al-Wāsiṭī shows that at least fifty were residents of Jerusalem, Palestine or Greater Syria. On the other hand, Abū al-Ma'ālī's essay, which often notes in the *isnād* the place where the *ḥadīth* was transmitted, shows that traditions in praise of Jerusalem were also studied in Egypt (Abū al-Ma'ālī, f. 13a, f. 62b), San'ā (*ibid.*, f. 46b), Mecca (*ibid.*, f. 476), 'Abādān and Qazwīn (*ibid.*, f. 51a), etc.

25 See al-Wāsiṭī, p. 102, no. 165.

26 See Rosenthal (n. 15 above), p. 150-272.

between those supporting and opposing the status of Jerusalem as a holy city? There is no doubt that political circumstances affected this status negatively. After the fall of the Umayyad caliphate, the center of the Muslim world moved from Syria to Iraq, and the special standing of Jerusalem so diligently fostered by the previous government, of necessity, diminished. The following two traditions may well reflect this process. (a) In the days of the second 'Abbāssid caliph, al-Manṣūr, an earthquake destroyed part of the Aqṣā mosque. When asked to send money for its renovation, al-Manṣūr ordered the gold and silver finish of the mosque gates removed in order to cover restoration expenses.<sup>27</sup> (b) It is said that various items were hung from the Dome of the Rock, among them the crown of the Persian kings, and the horns of the ram Abraham sacrificed instead of his son. When the 'Abbāssids came to power, these treasures were sent to the *Ka'ba*.<sup>28</sup>

The lack of *madrāsas* (religious seminaries) in Jerusalem to educate Muslim religious leaders also reflects the city's status. In his *Āthār al-Bilād*, al-Qazwīnī states unequivocally that the paucity of religious leaders and the numerous Christians were among the shortcomings (*'uyūb*) of Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup>

Why then did the first collection of *faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* appear in the fifth century, and not at some other time? Sivan suggests that the works of al-Wāsiṭī and Abū al-Ma'ālī were written some years after the anti-Christian persecution campaign initiated by the Fāṭimid caliph, al-Ḥākim Bi'amr Allāh, which culminated (1008-1009) in the destruction of part of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>30</sup> This seems reasonable, especially if we accept Goitein's assumption that the Dome of the Rock was built to counterbalance the opulent church buildings and prevent Muslims from being captivated by their beauty.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps, however, one can find a more prosaic reason. It is reported that in 407 A.H./1016-1017 C.E. "the large dome over the Rock collapsed."<sup>32</sup> The preacher of the Aqṣā mosque may have decided to collect the traditions in praise of Jerusalem and circulate them among the masses as a "fundraising campaign" for restoring the mosque. And he may have been further encouraged to link Jerusalem with Medina and Mecca as one of the three cities holy to Islam because that same year the southern corner of the *Ka'ba* (*al-rukn al-yamānī*) had become fissured and one of the outer walls of the Tomb of the Prophet in Medina had collapsed.<sup>33</sup>

27 See al-Wāsiṭī, p. 87, no. 137; Abū al-Ma'ālī, ms. Tübingen no. 27, f. 25a; *Ithāf al-Akhiṣṣā*, ms. Hebrew University, f. 63b, 39b; *al-Uns al-Djalīl*, I, 250.

28 See al-Wāsiṭī, p. 75-76, no. 122; Abū al-Ma'ālī, ms. Tübingen, f. 47a; *Ithāf al-Akhiṣṣā*, ms. Hebrew University f. 22b; *al-Uns al-Djalīl*, I, 243.

29 See al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, p. 161, quoting Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm* (Leiden, 1906), p. 167.

30 See E. Sivan, "The Beginnings of the *Faḍā'il al-Quds* Literature," *IOS* 1, 269.

31 See S.D. Goitein, above, n. 22, p. 139; compare *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm* (above, n. 28), p. 159.

32 See al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-Ibar*, III, 96; *al-Uns al-Djalīl*, I, 268-9.

33 See al-Uns al-Djalīl, *ibid.*

## A Survey of Al-Wāsiṭ's Faḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas Treatise

The essay by Al-Wāsiṭi is worth examining because it was the first of its type to be devoted to praise of Jerusalem. The traditions he cites may be classified into different categories, the most important as follows:

1. *Traditions based on orthodox exegesis of various Qur'anic verses linking them to Jerusalem, Palestine or persons living there.* The verses in question are verse 1 of *sūra* 17, which speaks of the Prophet's famous nocturnal journey to *al-Masjdjid al-Aqṣā*; verse 1 of *sūra* 95, where the name *al-zaytūn* is mentioned (commentators associate this with the mountain of Bayt al-Maqdis); verse 15 of *sūra* 79 which refers to a place called *al-Sāhira*; verse 41 of *sūra* 50, associated with Judgment Day in Jerusalem; verse 143 of *sūra* 2, linked to the designation of Jerusalem as the first Islamic *qibla* (prayer direction), etc.

2. *Traditions associated with Jerusalem and Palestine, most of which are accepted by ḥadīth scholars.* These include traditions about the three mosques—Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem—in their various forms and transfigurations, traditions about the Night Journey and the Ascension (*al-isrā' wa-l-mi'rādj*), and the stories which grew up about them, such as the Prophet's visit to Mt. Sinai, Hebron, Bethlehem and so on.

3. *Traditions usually classified as isrā'iliyyāt.* These supposedly include quotations from the Bible and New Testament as well as traditions dealing with Jews and Christians, such as the construction of the Temple by King Solomon, Jesus's prophecy of its downfall, and the stories about the destruction of the First and Second Temples. Most of them were transmitted either by Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 32 or 34 A.H./654 C.E.) or by Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 110-114 A.H.).

4. *Messianic and apocalyptic traditions,* such as the beliefs that Judgment Day will be heralded by the conquest of Jerusalem, that the rebuilding of Jerusalem will result in the destruction of Yathrib or Medina, that the *Ka'ba* will journey to Jerusalem on Judgment Day along with all those who made the pilgrimage, that Jerusalem will be the assembly-place of mankind on Judgment Day, that the bones of Muḥammad will be brought to Jerusalem on Judgment Day, and so on.

5. *Religious legal traditions.* The Prophet's urging of pilgrims to maintain a state of *iḥrām* (ritual consecration) upon their departure from Jerusalem (thus linking a visit to Jerusalem with the pilgrimage to Mecca); permitting pilgrimages to Jerusalem only for the sake of prayer (to prevent such customs as circling the Dome of the Rock, or *wuqūf*, i.e., standing on the Temple Mount on the eve of the Feast of Sacrifice in imitation of the pilgrimage to Mecca); traditions about visiting certain sites in Jerusalem to recite special prayers—a practice which does not seem to have been widely accepted; the prohibition against visiting the Church of Mary; vows to travel to Jerusalem by foot, etc.



6. *Historical traditions.* The capture of Jerusalem by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb; a list of companions of the Prophet who lived in Jerusalem; construction of the Dome of the Rock and renovation after an earthquake; the Jews assuming responsibility for illuminating the "*bayt al-maqdis*" until 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz replaced them with slaves.

7. *Accepted faḍā'il traditions.* The value of prayer in Jerusalem compared with prayer in other mosques; the order of creation, i.e. Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and then the rest of the world; the double recompense for good or bad deeds performed in Jerusalem; Jerusalem as the Garden of Eden; Jerusalem as the burial place of prophets such as Adam; the belief that the Pool of Siloam flows out of the Garden of Eden; that al-Khiḍr and Elias regularly prayed in Jerusalem; that Jerusalem is immune to drought, etc.

### The Status of Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis in Ḥadīth Criticism

Jerusalem's unique status in Islam has been a source of contention from the very start. While no Muslim ever denied that Jerusalem was the *'ulā al-qiblatayn* (the first of the two Muslim prayer directions), there was resistance to granting it special status. The historian al-Balāḍhurī (d. 275 A.H./892 C.E.) relays a tradition attributed to 'Awāna al-Kalbī (d. latter half eighth century C.E.) about the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, who popularized the use of the term *arḍ al-maḥshar wa-l-manshar* (land of ingathering and resurrection on Judgment Day) with regard to Jerusalem. Upon hearing of this, a man named Ṣa'ṣa'a b. Ṣūḥān dismissed it with the reply that "proximity to the land of ingathering would be of no use to the infidel, and remoteness, no barrier to the believer."<sup>34</sup>

Even prior to this, we find two traditions which reflect the dispute over Jerusalem. One involves the proposal of the Jewish convert Ka'b al-Aḥbār to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to build the mosque in such a way that Muslims could face both the Rock and Mecca at one and the same time. 'Umar refused, of course, and claimed that Ka'b's Jewish origin prompted him to make such a suggestion.<sup>35</sup> The other tradition, cited by Abū al-Ma'ālī, concerns the Muslim military commander Abū 'Ubayda, who asked to be buried "on the other side of the Jordan facing the Holy Land". He later retracted this request in favor of burial "wherever death should overtake him" lest he initiate a custom.<sup>36</sup> This tradition is obviously from a later period, but it reflects the controversy over the special status of Jerusalem.

When *ḥadīth* criticism (*'ilm al-djarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl*, *'ilm al-ridjāl*, *kutub al-mawḍū'āt*) established itself as a literary genre some time later, the majority of traditions in praise of cities and countries were rejected on an almost collective basis. Historians were accused of indiscriminately transmitting false traditions (*al-bāṭila*) in praise of cities—

34 See al-Balāḍhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, IV, A, p. 25.

35 See al-Maqdisī, *Muthīr al-Gharām*, f. 38b.

36 See Abu al-Ma'ālī, *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*, f. 69a.

particularly their own.<sup>37</sup> This was attributed to “love of one’s homeland” (*ḥubb al-awṭān wa-l-shaghaf bi-l-manshaʾ*) and longing for one’s land of origin. *Ḥadīth* scholars have stressed time and again their strictness (*tashdīd*) in transmitting traditions involving religious law, and leniency (*tasāmuh*) in such areas as desirable acts, optional religious duties, and *faḍāʾil*.<sup>38</sup> These statements relate mainly to *faḍāʾil* of Qurʾanic texts but are also applicable to *faḍāʾil* of cities.

Jerusalem *faḍāʾil*, however, were an exception to the rule. Here the strict *ḥadīth* scholars were more selective in their rejection of traditions and dealt with each one individually. They usually claimed that one of the transmitters was a scoundrel (*dadjdjāl*), a liar (*kadhḥāb*), a forger (*waḍḍāʾ*), a person of ill-repute (*sāqit*, *muttāham*), a storyteller (*qāṣṣ*), or accused him of copying traditions from the Jews to suit his own needs. These accusations were not unfounded. Compilers of *faḍāʾil* collections acknowledged them but continued their work undaunted. The author of *Muthīr al-Gharām fī Faḍāʾil al-Quds wa-l-Shām* explicitly says that he included in his work *al-aḥādīth min al-ṣaḥīḥ*, *wa-l-ḥasan wa-l-gharīb wa-l-ḍaʿīf wa-l-muḥṭamal wa-l-wāḥī al taʿlīf wa-l-mawḍūʾ wa-l-āthār al-qawīyya wa-l-wāḥiya wa-ghayr dhālika*.<sup>39</sup> (It would be difficult to translate all these terms, but they cover nearly all levels of *ḥadīth*, from the impeccable to the false.)

The battle over the special status of Jerusalem was not limited to *ḥadīth* criticism. At the end of the thirteenth century a fanatical religious leader by the name of Taqiyy al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (661-728 A.H./1263-1328 C.E.) declared open war against Jerusalem *faḍāʾil* literature and the customs which had taken hold with regard to the Rock and the Aqṣā mosque. On the basis of those traditions which he accepted as true and representative of authentic Islam, he wrote a brief essay called “*Qāʾida fī Ziyārat Bayt al-Maqdis*” (published in 1936), setting out rules of conduct for a visit to Jerusalem:

Visits to Jerusalem may only be made for prayer purposes.

No vows should be made to pray or spend a period of retreat in Jerusalem (*iʿtikāf*).

Visiting the tombs of the prophets is forbidden. (The traditions about the Prophet praying at the tombs of Moses and Abraham during his famous Night Journey are false, according to him.)

Circling the Rock or the Aqṣā mosque is forbidden.

Praying in the direction of the Rock is forbidden.

Slaughtering animals for sacrifice near the Rock or al-Aqṣā is forbidden.

Entering the places of worship of the “infidels” is forbidden.

There is no *Haram* in Jerusalem (an area surrounding a holy place where it is forbidden to hunt, uproot trees, etc.).

A visit to Jerusalem should preferably not coincide with the Feast of Sacrifice, because many “errant” persons go there at this time to perform the ritual of *taʾrīf* (standing

37 See al-Shawkānī, *al-Fawāʾid al-Madjmūʾa fī al-Aḥādīth al-Mawḍūʾa*, p. 436.

38 See al-Kandjī, *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis*, ms. Tübingen, f. 97b; also *Faḍāʾil al-Shām* (anonymous), ms. Tübingen, f. 62b.

39 See *Muthīr al-Gharām*, p. 65.

opposite the Temple Mount on the day of “‘Arafa” instead of on Mount ‘Arafāt near Mecca).

The pilgrimage to Mecca should not be combined with a visit to Jerusalem.

SYMPOSIUM

For Ibn Taymiyya, listing these prohibitions is not enough. He goes on to say that violation of one of them is equal to renunciation of Islam (*kāfir murtadd*) and demands that the “infidel” be required to repent. If he repents, all is well; if not—he is to be executed.<sup>40</sup>

In retrospect, however, we see that it was not Ibn Taymiyya and others opposing the sanctity of Jerusalem who prevailed, but rather the authors of *faḍā’il Bayt al-Maqdis*. There is no more convincing proof of this than the fact that *faḍā’il* literature continued to flourish after Ibn Taymiyya without serious opposition, and that, since June 1967, it has been unreservedly accepted as authentic by important preachers in the mosques of most Islamic countries.

## APPENDIX

A selection of Islamic traditions in praise of Jerusalem from *Faḍā’il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī.<sup>1</sup>

### The Contention Over the Status of Jerusalem

Mu‘ādh b. Djabal:

The Prophet (Ṣ)<sup>2</sup> said: The rebuilding of Jerusalem (will signify) the destruction of Yathrib, the destruction of Yathrib will cause the *malḥama*, the *malḥama* will end in the fall of Constantinople, and the fall of Constantinople will result in the appearance of the Antichrist.<sup>3</sup> Then the Prophet tapped the hand or shoulder of the man he was speaking to and added: This is as true as the fact that I sit here.

Ka‘b [al-Aḥbār]:

Pilgrimage to (Mecca) is preferable to two ‘*umras*; one ‘*umra* is preferable to two trips to Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> Resurrection of the Dead will not take place until one of the two temples journeys to the other, since Allāh’s abode and seat of judgment is there.

‘Atā’ al-Khurāsānī and others:

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar [b. al-Khaṭṭāb] arrived in Jerusalem after morning prayers, sat in

40 See Ibn Taymiyya, *Qā’ida fī Ziyārat Bayt al-Maqdis*, *JAOS* 56 (1936), 11.

1 The Arabic original was published by Magnes Press, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in 1979.

2 (Ṣ) is the abbreviation of *Ṣallā Allāhu ‘alayhi wā-sallama* (God bless him and grant him salvation), the eulogy which Muslims usually put after the name of the Prophet Muḥammad.

3 On the war connected with the capture of Constantinople, see *EL*, *Malāḥim* (by D.B. Macdonald).

4 ‘*Umra*: pilgrimage to Mecca not at the customary time.

the mosque until sunrise, rose, prostrated himself several times along with those accompanying him, and then set out again on his travels without visiting the Rock.

Nāfi' [b. 'Abd Allāh]:

While in Jerusalem Ibn 'Umar said: O Nāfi', let us leave this place where both sins and good deeds are doubly compounded.

Al-Walīd said: I asked al-Awazā'i:<sup>5</sup> How does the law regard a person who vows to carry out a pilgrimage to Jerusalem? He replied: [Companions and disciples of the Prophet] were not wont to make such vows. If a person does so in ignorance he should not make the journey by foot and should give charity for his having ridden.

Dja'far b. Musāfir:

In Jerusalem I saw Mu'ammal b. Ismā'il giving something to certain people who took him to visit the (holy) places. [Dja'far's] son said: Father, Wakī' b. al-Djarrāḥ did not tour Jerusalem when he there. He replied: Each does as he pleases.

### Exegesis of the Qur'ān

Abū Hurayra:

Your Lord swore "by the fig and the olive".<sup>6</sup> This refers to "*Tūr Zaytā*" or the Mount of Olives.

Ibrāhīm b. Abī 'Abla:

When Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, said, "and behold! they will all come out in the open,"<sup>7</sup> he refers to a valley called al-Sāhira beside the Mount of Olives.

Qatāda:

The fig refers to the mountain upon which Damascus was built and the olive to that upon which Jerusalem was built.

Ibn 'Abbās:

The verse "for the day when the caller shall call from a near place"<sup>8</sup> refers to the Rock.

Ziād b. Abī Sawda:

'Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit stood upon the eastern wall of Jerusalem and wept. Someone asked him: What makes you weep, Abū al-Walīd? He said: The Prophet (Ṣ) told us he saw Hell from this spot.

'Abd Allah b. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ says the verse "and a wall shall be set up between them, having a door in the inward whereof is mercy, and against the outward thereof is chastisement [of hell]"<sup>9</sup> refers to the eastern wall of Jerusalem.

5 A famous authority on Muslim religious law (d. 157 A.H./774 C.E.).

6 *The Fig*, verse 1.

7 *The Pluckers*, verse 14, English translation of the Qur'ān by Maulawī Sher 'Alī (Rabwah, West Pakistan, 1967).

8 *Qāf*, verse 41.

9 *Iron*, verse 13.

## Traditions to Legitimize a Regime; Political Influence on the Status of Jerusalem

SYMPOSIUM

Ka'b [al-Aḥbār]:

It says in the "Torah": rejoice O *Ūrīshalim!*—which means the city of Jerusalem, whereas *al-Ṣakhra* means the Temple—I will send you My servant 'Abd al-Malik to rebuild and adorn you.

[Manṣūr b. Thābit]:

In the days of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, the ram's horn of Abraham, the crown of Kisrā (Xerxes), and an incomparably precious stone hung from a chain in the center of the Dome of the Rock. When the sons of Hāshim assumed the caliphate, these items were taken to the *Ka'ba*.

al-Sībānī:

A ruler was not considered a caliph unless he reigned over both the Holy Mosque (Mecca) and the Jerusalem Mosque.

## Jewish and Christian Traditions Adapted by Islam

Khālīd b. Khāzim:

When al-Zuhrī came to Jerusalem I took him to pray at the holy sites. I said to him: There is a sheikh here called 'Uqba b. Abī Zaynab who relates traditions from the Books.<sup>10</sup> Would you like to meet him? We sat beside him and he began to extol the virtues of Jerusalem. At length al-Zuhrī said to him: O sheikh! You will never be able to outdo Allāh's words in praise of Jerusalem "Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque."<sup>11</sup> This angered the sheikh, who said: The hour of resurrection will never arrive until the bones of Muḥammad (S) are transferred to Jerusalem.

Ṣafwān b. 'Amr:

It says in the "Torah": Jerusalem is a golden goblet, full of scorpions.

Radjā' b. Ḥaywa:

Ka'b [al-Aḥbār] once came to Īliyā' (Aelia Capitolina) and offered several dozen dinar to a Jewish scholar to take him to the rock where Solomon the son of David stood when he completed the building of the "mosque". This rock is located behind the corner of the Lion's Gate.

Ka'b said: Solomon the son of David stood upon this rock. Then he faced Jerusalem and asked Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, to grant him three wishes. Allāh gave him a sign that the first two would be speedily granted and I [Ka'b] hope the third will be granted as well. He [Solomon] said: Grant me a kingdom which no one else will surpass

10 This is the term usually used for Jewish or Christian sources—those of the "People of the Book".

11 *The Night Journey*, verse 1.

because You are the all bountiful provider. This was granted. [Solomon] said: Allāh! Grant me a kingdom and the ability to judge as You do. Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, granted him this. And then [Solomon] said: Allāh! Let all who enter this mosque to pray be cleansed of their sins as on the day they were born.

Khālīd b. Ma'dān:

Adam's head lies to the right of the Rock and his feet, 18 *mīl* away.

Abū 'Umar:

Adam's legs lie beside the Rock and his head near the mosque of Abraham (Ṣ). On the Day of Resurrection, Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, will raise Adam to his feet and then assemble all his descendants, saying: O Adam! I bring to you all your descendants, but you I will not move because of My high regard for you.

al-Sībānī:

When Allāh returned Solomon b. David's kingdom to him, he [Solomon] walked from Ascalon to Jerusalem dressed in rags as a sign of humility before Allāh, may He be blessed and exalted.

Abū Zur'a al-Shaybānī:

'Īsā b. Maryam [i.e. Jesus of Nazareth] was raised [to heaven] over the Mount of Olives. Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, sent down a gust of wind which blew around him and quickly raised him upwards to heaven.

Mālīk b. Dīnār:

'Īsā b. Maryam, blessed be He, entered the Jerusalem mosque while the Israelites were engaged there in trade. Rolling up his robe, he began to hit them with it until they dispersed and then said: O, sons of snakes and vipers, you have turned Allāh's mosque into marketplaces.

al-Walīd b. Muslim:

When the messenger of Allāh (Ṣ) appeared in Jerusalem on the night he was carried there, he saw two shining lights, one to the right of the mosque and one to the left. He asked Gabriel [the Archangel] what these were. He replied: On your right is the *mihrāb*<sup>12</sup> of your brother David, and on your left is the one over the tomb of your sister Maryam.

### Faḍā'il Traditions

Ka'b [al-Aḥbār]:

Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, looks towards Jerusalem twice each day.

'Aṭā':

Judgment Day will not come until Allāh leads the best of his bondsmen to live in Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

12 The *mihrāb* is the niche at the east end of the mosque showing the direction of Mecca.



Ka'b [al-Aḥbār]:

Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, said of Jerusalem: You are My Garden of Eden, My hallowed and chosen land. Whoever lives here does so because I had mercy upon him, and whoever leaves this place does so because I am angry with him.

ʿAbd al-Malik [b. Marwān] asked Nawf al-Bikālī: Have you heard anything about Jerusalem? Nawf said: It is written in the Book of Allāh which descended from Heaven<sup>13</sup> that Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, said [of Jerusalem]: You are six things—My abode, My seat of judgment, My assembly-place [on the Day of Judgment], My Garden of Eden, My Hell, and My scale [of justice].

Ka'b al-Aḥbār:

Allāh says of Jerusalem: You are the seat of My lower kingdom, from you I rose to the Heavens, from you I left the earth, and beneath you I placed all the sweet waters which flow from the mountain tops.

Abū al-ʿĀliya:

When Allāh, glorified be He, said “unto the land we had blessed for all beings,”<sup>14</sup> He meant that all sweet water originates from the Rock.

Nawf al-Bikālī:

Beneath the Rock is the source of the four rivers of Paradise: the Siḥon, the Giḥon, the Euphrates and the Nile.

Abū Hurayra:

The Prophet said: All the rivers, clouds, oceans, and winds originate beneath the Rock.

Ka'b [al-Aḥbār]:

One day in Jerusalem is like a thousand days, one month like a thousand months, and one year like a thousand years. Dying there is like dying in the first sphere of heaven, and dying in the vicinity is like dying in [Jerusalem itself].

Ka'b al-Aḥbār:

Those buried in Jerusalem are held to have crossed the “bridge of Hell” (*al-ṣirāṭ*).

Ka'b al-Aḥbār:

Those buried in Jerusalem must not be tortured.

Khulayd b. Daʿladj:

I heard al-Ḥasan say: He who is buried in Jerusalem in “zaytūn al-Milla”<sup>15</sup> is buried as if in the first sphere of heaven. Khulayd added: I knew not where “al-Milla” was until I came to Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup> This usually refers to the “true” Torah given to the Israelites.

<sup>14</sup> *The Prophets*, verse 71.

<sup>15</sup> This seems to be a reference to Mamilla.

‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. ‘Adiyy al-Māzinī:

‘Abd al-Razzāq asked me where I lived. I told him I was from Jerusalem. He asked me: Do you know where “zaytūn al-Milla” is? I said yes. He said: I was told it was one of the groves of the Garden of Eden.

‘Ā’isha:

The Prophet (Ṣ) said: Mecca is the city Allāh exalted or sanctified, created and surrounded by angels a thousand years before creating anything else on earth. Then He joined it with Medina and united Medina to Jerusalem, and only a thousand years later created the [rest of the] world in a single act.

### Special Rituals for Jerusalem

Ka’b al-Aḥbār:

He who comes to Jerusalem, prays to the right and to the left of the mosque, calls upon Allāh from the place where the chain hung and donates a large or small sum of money to charity, Allāh pays heed to his prayer, removes from him all sorrow, cleanses him of his sins as on the day he was born, and if he asks Allāh to grant him [the privilege of] a martyr’s death, he will receive his wish.

Khālīd b. Ma’dān al-Kalā’ī:

It is the duty of he who comes to Jerusalem to visit the eastern *miḥrāb* of David, to pray there and to swim in the waters of the Pool of Siloam, because these originate in the Garden of Eden. He is forbidden to enter the churches and buy there because a sin committed there is equal to a thousand sins, and a good deed to a thousand good deeds.

### Jerusalem as the First Islamic Prayer Direction

al-Barā’:

The messenger of Allāh, God bless him and grant him salvation, prayed towards Jerusalem for a period of 16-17 months. He wanted his *qibla*<sup>16</sup> to be “the House”.<sup>17</sup>

al-Barā’:

“God would never leave your faith to waste”<sup>18</sup> refers to your prayers in the direction of Jerusalem.

Ibn ‘Abbās:

The first matter in the Qur’ān to be abrogated, so we have been told and Allāh is the one who knows, was that of the *qibla*. In Mecca, the Prophet (Ṣ) and his companions prayed in the direction of the *Ka’ba* for eight years. They prostrated themselves twice in the morning and twice in the evening, and when the Prophet ascended to Heaven he was commanded to pray five times. Since then travellers prostrate themselves twice and permanent residents, four times.

16 *Qibla* means prayer direction.

17 The temple in Mecca.

18 *The Cow*, verse 143.



When the Prophet (S) fled on the second day of the month of Rabī' al-awwal, Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, commanded him to pray towards Jerusalem, the Jewish *qibla*, so as not to estrange the People of the Book... The Prophet (S) faced this direction for 17 months after arriving from Medina. The *Anṣār*<sup>19</sup> prayed towards Jerusalem for two years prior to the *hidjra*, and the Qur'ān makes the following mention of the matter: "To God belong the East and West; whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God."<sup>20</sup>

Qatāda:

I asked Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib: How can one tell the difference between the early *muhādjirūn* and the later ones? He answered: He who prayed towards both *qiblas* is considered an early *muhādjir*.

Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī:

From the time Adam descended to this world, Allāh has never sent a prophet without making the Rock his *qibla*. Our prophet Muḥammad (S) prayed in the direction of the Rock for 16 months. He often asked Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, to change his *qibla* to Mecca and Allāh granted him this. [The Rock] was made holy, holy, holy. And this is the land that Allāh, may He be praised and exalted, called "the land that we had blessed for all beings."<sup>21</sup>

## Anti-Christian Traditions

Thaur b. Yazīd:

I was told that Ka'b [al-Aḥbār] met his nephew and another man accompanying him and asked them: Where are you going? They said: To Īliyā' (Aelia Capitolina). Ka'b said: Hush! Do not say Īliyā' but rather Allāh's Temple, His chosen, best land, His treasure and abode. He spread out the world from Jerusalem, and to Jerusalem He will gather it up. Ka'b continued: Do you intend to do something aside from praying there? They said no. He said: Good, good. Do you know to what Jerusalem is likened in the eyes of Allāh, may He be blessed and exalted, in comparison with other countries? And how sublime are Allāh's parables! It is likened to a wealthy man who owns a treasure. This treasure is his most prized possession and is the only thing he has eyes for upon waking in the morning. So it is with the Creator of the Universe, may He be praised and exalted, who looks towards [Jerusalem] every morning before looking at anything else. His patronage and mercy are first bestowed upon [Jerusalem] and only then on the rest of the world. Do not visit the Church of Mary or the Two Pillars, for these are pagan (*ṭāghūt*), and the prayers of he who goes there are null and void unless he repents. Cursed be the Christians who were unable to foresee the future! They could find nowhere to build a church but in Gehenna (Valley of Ben Hinom).

19 Supporters of the Prophet among the residents of Medina.

20 *The Cow*, verse 115.

21 *The Prophets*, verse 71.

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